From: Lloyd Ultan

*The Northern Borough: A History of the Bronx*

Bronx, NY: The Bronx County Historical Society

2009

1960: A Seemingly Ordinary Year (pp. 282 -283)

Two other significant events in 1960 seemed to show the usual continuing growth of the borough. A new, huge amusement park opened on what had been swampy land on the west bank of the Hutchinson River. This park had American history as its theme, and its borders formed an outline of a map of the United States. It was called Freedomland.

Visitors entered onto a street resembling a typical nineteenth century New York City thoroughfare, with shops on either side. From there, people could board a horsecar that would take them to Chicago. There, a façade of a building with gas jets streaming flames out from empty windows became an invitation for spectators to man a hand fire pumping apparatus to spray water on the blaze to help put out the great Chicago fire. Visitors could also sail on a sidewheeler down the Mississippi River, or ride a burro into the Grand Canyon. At night. Popular music concerts were held to attract teenagers.

There were two things wrong with Freedomland. First, it was difficult to get to without a car. The only public transportation was a single bus line with the amusement park its last stop. Second, older amusement parks had fast-moving roller coasters or rides that whipped a passenger around at dizzying speed, but Freedomland’s rides moved at a slow, nineteenth-century pace. The park was in financial difficulty from the beginning, and it folded in 1964 when it faced serious competition from the World’s Fair in Flushing in Queens.